

Graduate Forum, 1/10/19, 6:00 p.m., Meeting Notes

Panel of Graduates:

Katherine Powers (Tufts Univ.)

Nik Jok (American Univ.)

Harbin Cheung (Univ. of Houston)

Griffin Khosla (Bentley Univ.)

Aefee (Harvard)

Jasmine Singh (American Univ.)

Solomon (Univ. of Houston)

Jonathan Gonzalez (A&M/Galveston)

Question and Answers:

Q: How did CVHS prepare you for college?

Academically we were totally prepared.

Q: What do you wish you had done differently?

Definitely write your essays early – summer before your junior year. Let many people read essay, teacher, friends and relatives will make suggestions that can help. Also start your application process early for the schools you know you want – you will not submit until school essays are available and applications are complete.

Apply for as many scholarships as you can, but look for bigger dollars (\$2,500 plus – not just \$500 ones). Make sure you read carefully and follow directions.

Benjamin Holloway from Apply With Sanity was a calm and helpful source (He will speak at CVHS PTO's February 21, 7:30a.m. General Meeting)

Q: How was your transition into college?

Scared for communal bathrooms. Roommate was a big one. Find someone you will enjoy as a roommate. Find someone to help motivate you not someone you need to take care of. Push yourself to get out of your room and talk to people as it can be pretty isolating. Learn what to do with your free time and use it wisely. The biggest adjustment for some was being independent and living on your own.

Q: Biggest adjustment to college?

All the free time was really different. Teachers don't approach you, you have to take the initiative. Sleep schedule adjustment with classes all over campus and at different times. No extra credit was different. Missed the supportive environment that CVHS offers with teachers and students alike.

Q: How many applications did you complete?

Started with large number of schools and narrowed it down.

Panel said 6-15 colleges (10 was the average applied to).

All had safety schools (schools you can easily get into), target (schools that check off all the boxes you want and work with your academic profile) and reach (dream school that you might not really qualify for).

Q: How much did applications cost?

Around \$75. Some schools have fee waivers. Remember also fees connected to sending test scores to colleges too.

Q: Essays – any guidance?

You want the essay to be a clear reflection of you, so go to teachers that you have a good relationship with for input. Also many found student input as helpful.

Q: What they wish they would have done differently? Parents also asked about financial aid?

Found out that you can share scholarship offerings received from another college with a college you are interested in attending, but did not receive enough money to attend. Must fill out FAFSA, according to parents process is easier than in the past as it not can connect to your tax return. For most schools, scholarship awards will not be sent until FAFSA is complete.

Q: Was CVHS Helpful with the college search? Available resources?

CVHS was very helpful. They are always reminding us of deadlines, notifying us when schools are visiting, or just emailing us about schools and opportunities. We all met with our counselors, Chapman and Frau throughout our Junior and Senior years. Also, HISD's College Success Program Representative, Nathan Truong meets with CVHS seniors on Fridays. All were helpful, supportive and knowledgeable. Although the focus is juniors and seniors, they are happy to meet with underclassman when time permits.

Q: How did you go about choosing the schools that you want to apply to?

The school decision is important, but sometimes you need a reality check to consider if they are offering you money to attend. Choose a school that gives you more opportunities and resources to do what you want. Connections and who you know is important. Focus on whether a school is a fit for you. Visit local schools to get a baseline feel that you can use when comparing other campuses. Try to do fly-ins (where schools offer a trip to their school to visit their campus. This trip may be paid for or partially paid for) and take advantage of them when offered by schools. You will have to look at each individual school (usually through admissions) to see if this is offered.

Q: In your transition from Middle School to CVHS, did anyone want to leave? Were you glad you stayed? Would you have had a better chance of succeeding elsewhere?

Wanted to leave but it is something you need to ride out until you learn how to manage your time properly. College was an easier transition that CVHS was – because we were so prepared. Colleges know that CVHS is a tough school so in the long run graduating from CVHS gave me a better education and support system. We learn so differently at Carnegie and being around kids that challenged me helped me be successful. Find something healthy and happy here that will urge you to stay. Since only the top 10 percent receive their ranking on the transcripts, colleges take a closer look at our kids and look at essays, letters of recommendation and test scores.

Q: What has the most emphasis – SAT, ACT, Essays, Grades, Recommendation Letters or Volunteer Hours?

The whole package is important! SAT and ACT are strong factors because they are national. GPA is important but they relate how hard each class was. Extra-curricular are important because it helps show that you will contribute to the community. Become very involved in a few clubs because it shows commitment – don't just be a member of a ton of clubs.

Q: Why would you apply Early Decision over Early Action?

Early Decision is binding if the college accepts you. If you have found the college that you really want to attend and will attend – go Early Decision. The only way to break the contract is financial proof that you cannot afford the school. Early Action, if offered, shows you are interested in attending the college.